

Award-winning performances recognized

Leeza's Place hosts Family Movie Night at the Oscars

By Denise M. Baran-Unland
FOR THE HERALD NEWS

Amy Barma never expected to win an Oscar and was completely taken aback when it happened.

"I didn't even have a speech prepared," said Barma, 40, of Plainfield.

Barma, a frequent volunteer at Leeza's Place at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center in Joliet, helped out with the organization's first Family Movie Night at the Oscars on Feb. 18 and received a little 6-inch gold plastic Oscar for Best Creative Artist.

Other awards distributed that evening included Best Caregiver (Leading Role), Best Family Member (Supporting Role), Best Storyteller, Best Original Line, Best Drama King or Queen and Best Laugh.

The 30 some caregivers, family members and volunteers who attended nominated themselves by dropping their names into buckets marked with the categories. Winners were randomly selected through a drawing.

"It was so cute. They thought of everything and everyone felt really welcomed," Barma said. "They had the red carpet and everyone was trying to look for their name on the stars they had all

over the floor. I like to do things to help out other people and Leeza's Place is such a wonderful place that I like to volunteer there whenever I can.

The event was hosted in conjunction with the 81st annual Academy Awards on Sunday and the Leeza Gibbons and Olivia Newton-John's "A Night to Remember," fundraising post-awards party to benefit the Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation and the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Center.

Leeza had asked all of her locations to set up some sort of party, too, either before or after the Oscars and to send some movies of the different things we do to be shown on the big screen at this party," said Kim Jackson, assistant advocate at the Joliet organization. "It's a good idea because it will get national coverage.

"Hopefully, someday, there will be a Leeza's Place in every state — I'd like to see one in every county — because there are so many caregivers out there who need our help and that's what we're here for."

In addition to the red carpet, the stars and the "Oscar" awards, the participants — tickets in hand — socialized as if they were at a gala party and had the opportunity to be photographed behind a cut-out board of a man in a tuxedo and a blonde lady in a sexy dress.

Frank and Anne Costello, parents of an adult member of Leeza's Place brain injury support group, not only enjoyed



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Participants watch a movie during Family Movie Night at the Oscars at Leeza's Place at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center in Joliet.

this event, they praised every activity that Leeza's Place offers.

Everything is always well-planned and well-organized," Anne said. "Everyone is in different stages of recovery, but the idea is that they can all get together and learn from one another. It's very gratifying."

At the appointed time, the lights

were shut down and everyone gathered for the feature film, the 2004 love story about a young couple who fall in love in the 1940s and wind up together in the same nursing home.

It's about dementia and how a notebook is used to tell the story of the woman's life," Jackson said. "We've wanted to show this movie for a long

time so the caregivers and their loved ones can see how well they know how life can change."

For more information on the national event visit www.leezagibbonsoscar-night.com. For more information about Leeza's Place at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center in Joliet call 815-741-0077.